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## DOCTORS' WARNING: DON'T BE A SHEEP AT SCHOOLIES

Doctors are urging teenagers to stay safe at Schoolies by learning to say 'no' to their mates.

While many young people fully understand the risks of alcohol and drugs, AMA Queensland says peer pressure is still a major threat to their health at Schoolies.

Broadbeach GP Dr Sonu Haikerwal said the annual Schoolies pilgrimage would be a hectic period for Gold Coast doctors dealing with the aftermath of wild partying.

"Schoolies is always a busy time for doctors on the Gold Coast," Dr Haikerwal said.

"Safe party areas have definitely changed the awareness of some young people, but peer pressure creates an atmosphere where high-risk behaviour is encouraged.

"The health consequences of drug abuse and alcohol can be serious for young people.

"They need to stay in control and realise that it's OK to say no to their friends."

Statistics for 2015-16 show those aged between 15-24 and 25-34 are most likely to visit emergency departments, with women more likely to need treatment than men.

Dr Jim Finn, Vice-President of AMA Queensland and a drug addiction expert, said young people faced a slippery slope at Schoolies.

"Risk-taking behaviour such as the drug and alcohol abuse that has been prevalent at Schoolies can have life-changing consequences," Dr Finn said

"We're talking about adolescents who don't usually drink and often cannot drink legally.

"But there is an expectation that they will partake and that is very dangerous for people who are not used to the affects of alcohol.

"Recreational drugs are also a very real concern. Quite often the substance young people take is not even the drug they think they have.

"Young people are gambling with their health and their lives without realising it."

AMA Queensland is asking Schoolies' parents to have honest and open conversations with their children about the consequences of poor decision-making.

"Young people must learn that they don't have to fit into the crowd," Dr Finn said.

"They can have fun without destroying their health and maybe their future."

More information is also available online at [www.qld.gov.au/health](http://www.qld.gov.au/health) or by calling 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

**Media Contacts: Stuart Sherwin, Sequel PR - 0403 090 914 or 07 3251 8111  
Chiara Lesèvre, AMA Queensland - 0419 735 641 or 07 3872 2209.**